

the point of their pens, all those who are in any degree oppressed may well regret that the hand of death robbed them of a powerful statement of their rights.<sup>1</sup>

It would not appear that the flagellation of vice which one finds in the Kougon-Macquart novels has had any wide-spread effect in France, though it has undoubtedly done good in individual cases. From the general standpoint Paris shows little sign of improvement in some matters. The number of illegitimate births and the number of divorce cases remain extremely large. It may be said, however, that these point less to absolute immorality than to new conceptions of marriage and discontent with existing laws. "With respect to the illegitimate births one finds the fathers of the children constantly recognising their paternity in the official declarations of birth, and thereby making themselves responsible for the upbringing of the little ones. The fact is that cohabitation without marriage seems to increase, while there is a falling off both in the number of marriages and in the cases of desertion following seduction.

As regards "L'Assommoir," respecting which the writer has often cordially re-echoed the opinion that it is one of the greatest temperance tracts ever written, one can only say that, like other books of Zola's, it has done good in individual instances, but has failed to stem the general passion for

strong drink. The sobriety of the French nation was at one time almost proverbial, but there has been a great change in that matter since the War of 1870. The efforts

<sup>1</sup> Zola left the libretto of a *drame lyrique*, "l'Enfant Boi," which was since set to music, and which is to be performed at the Opéra Comique in Paris.